

COSMOPOLITAN CHRONICLE

True tales from the annals of history, archaeology, construction, and
restoration of the Casa de Bandini and Cosmopolitan Hotel.
Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

VOL. III. No. 9

SAN DIEGO, ALTA CALIFORNIA, MAY 8, 2009

PRICE: FREE

The Cosmo Sitting Room

Victor A. Walsh

District Historian

San Diego Coast District

Along with the bar, the other premier public space in the Cosmopolitan Hotel was its "spacious sitting room." Located in the large first-floor corner room facing the plaza, it provided hotel guests, including family members and visitors, with a place to dine and socialize.

Like the bar, it had decorative redwood beaded wainscoting and window wells painted with an oak-grain faux finish. It also had a tongue-and-groove Douglas fir floor, ideal for dancing, and a redbrick fireplace with a curved arch trim and Greek Revival wooden mantelpiece. The tall multi-paned windows allowed ample light into the room on sunny afternoons. A chandelier most likely hung from the ceiling.

The sitting room most likely had a separate dining area. A photograph, circa 1890, shows an interior cross wall with beaded wainscoting and a single, wood-trim doorway on the far side of the room.

By the early 1870s, as Albert Seeley and his wife Emily's social standing rose, the room had

become the town's community center. It was the scene of raffles, family reunions, dances, Christmas parties, evening balls and weddings.

One such event, a dinner dance honoring the "ladies of San Diego" occurred on a Tuesday night in September 1872. The *San Diego Daily World* described the "scene of revelry" in loving, impressionistic detail.

The hall was decorated with tasteful festoons. The American flag depended (sic) in very direction, and flowers and symbols of nationality consecrated the event....

About nine o'clock the delightful affair was under way. The beauties of San Diego were on hand *en masse*, and the dance fairly under way....(But) the ladies were all holding back. None of them were willing to go forward. Bonaparte solved the difficulty in a trice. He called out for the youngest ladies to enter and they all started at once.

The reporter at this point describes the ladies' attire in great detail, omitting various letters from their last names to create an aura of mystery and romance.

Mrs. S-l-y was another brunette who selected a black

costume. Of this toilet, quite a favorite amongst the ladies last night, it may be remarked that Bulwer says that only *distingue* people look well in it. We rejoice in quite a number of *distingue* looking people in San Diego, for a wonderfully large number of ladies looked charming Tuesday night in this tint; amongst whom was Mrs. Estudillo, who varied the plain black with a white stripe, Mrs. C-thw-te, and Mrs. S. M-rr-n.

Mrs. J. M-rr-n, another brunette, and an exquisite dancer, was dressed in a handsome barege; while Mrs. H-n-t-n, a pleasing brunette, attracted admirers by a very charming white toilet.

The sitting room was the hotel's largest room, and along with the bar and billiard rooms, the most elegant in terms of appearance. Private rooms upstairs where guests and boarders stayed were considerably smaller and more utilitarian. Boarders, for instance, stayed in cramped, shoebox-size rooms, 10 x 11 feet.

The availability and use of public space, we can conclude, was the Cosmopolitan Hotel's defining hallmark.

